3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

stones. It is covered with green leaves and earth and steamed for an hour or more. With the "true food" is served a dish consisting of fish, if possible, and edible green leaves boiled in coconut cream. The ingredients for the boiled dish are gathered and prepared in large imported iron pots by the women. Formerly earthenware pots made in Lau were used, but pots are no longer made.[2] Without fish the meal is considered very poor indeed.

Most families have sufficient initiative to cope with the food problem in years of normal rainfall, so that the islands are practically self-sufficient. But when a violent hurricane sweeps over the islands, destroying harvests and habitations—or a long, searing drought withers the crops—even the coarsest edible jungle roots will not cover the needs of the famine island inhabitants, who would starve without the rice and flour which are rushed to their aid by the colonial government in Suva. Such a hurricane occurred in 1936.

Fortunately catastrophes of this kind do not occur often, but drought is a constant menace. Rain is quickly absorbed through the sharp, porous limestone. There are no streams and only a very few water holes, which are usually brackish. Practically all the fresh water used by the natives must be collected in tanks and wooden bowls from roofs of imported sheet iron or of thatch. The natives, however, require amazingly little fresh water. They drink the sweet milk of the young coconut, steam their food in the earth oven or boil it in coconut cream, and bathe in the sea. Only since they have donned *lavalavas* of cloth have they needed fresh water for laundering. The government has aided the natives in building small cement reservoirs roofed with sheet iron for each village, but the natives are so little concerned with the lack of fresh water that they do not repair the reservoirs, and few of them are in use.

[2] L. Thompson, "The Pottery of the Lau Islands, Fiji," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1938.